



# WHAT IS STROKE ?



- A stroke occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is suddenly interrupted (ischemic) or when a blood vessel in the brain bursts, spilling blood into the spaces surrounding the brain cells (hemorrhagic).
- The symptoms of stroke are easy to spot: sudden numbness or weakness, especially on one side of the body; sudden confusion or trouble speaking or understanding speech; sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes; sudden trouble walking; dizziness; or loss of balance or coordination.
- Brain cells die when they no longer receive oxygen and nutrients from the blood or when they are damaged by sudden bleeding into or around the brain. With timely treatment, these cells can be saved.
- Stroke is diagnosed through several techniques: a short neurological examination, blood tests, CT scans, MRI scans, Doppler ultrasound, and arteriography.
- The **most important risk factors** for stroke are **hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, and cigarette smoking**. Other risks include **heavy alcohol consumption, high blood cholesterol levels, illicit drug use, and genetic or congenital conditions**.

## ***KNOW YOUR RISK***

### **If You...**

Smoke Cigarettes  
Have High Blood Pressure  
Have High Cholesterol  
Have Heart Disease  
Have Diabetes  
Are Overweight...you are at risk of having a stroke!

These are “controllable” risk factors.

## ***CONTROL YOUR RISK***

Quit Smoking! Smoking doubles the risk of stroke.

**Check your Blood Pressure.** Hypertension (high blood pressure) is the single most controllable stroke risk factor. Desirable Blood Pressure is 120/80. Check your blood pressure at least every two years. If you or someone in your family has a history of high blood pressure, check more often. High blood pressure can sometimes be controlled with **small lifestyle changes** such as a **low salt diet**, **increased physical activity**, **quitting smoking**, and **losing excess weight**. In some cases, the doctor may prescribe medication.

**Lower your Cholesterol.** Cholesterol greater than 200 is considered high. High levels in the blood can cause buildup of waxy plaque on the artery walls which can clog the arteries and cause a stroke or heart attack. **Simple changes in diet and increasing physical activity** are sometimes all that is needed to reduce your cholesterol. In some cases the doctor may prescribe medication.

## ***IS THERE ANY TREATMENT?***

- Stroke is treatable.
- Acute stroke therapies try to stop a stroke while it is happening. Medication or drug therapy is the most common treatment for stroke.
- Stroke can affect the entire body. Some of the disabilities that can result from stroke include paralysis, cognitive deficits, speech problems, emotional difficulties, daily living problems, and pain.